



## *Parshas Beshalach 2023, into the unexpected*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated to honoring the Rebbe and the work of Chabad Lubavitch worldwide.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Shaul Ben Berta and Lior Gabay Ben Michal and in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.*

Our Parsha begins with Pharaoh regretting his decision to free the Jewish nation; he decides to chase after them and finish his Jewish problem. As the Jewish nation approached the Yam Suf - the sea of reeds, they noticed the Egyptian army quickly approaching from behind and trapping them against the water.

They panicked and cried to Moshe, *"why have you taken us out of Egypt? We would have rather stayed in Egypt as slaves."* Moshe Rabbeinu responded, *"Don't be afraid! Stand firm and see the salvation that G-d will do for you today. **G-d will fight on your behalf, and you should remain silent.**"*

G-d told Moshe to stretch his stick over the water to split for the Jewish nation. Moshe did as G-d instructed, and a strong wind came from the east and split the water creating a dry path for the Jewish people to pass through.

As they finished crossing the sea, the waters immediately came crashing down on Pharaoh and his armies. Moshe and his sister Miriam led the Jewish people in song and dance as the water spat out the deceased Egyptians. They thanked and praised G-d for the incredible and awesome miracle that had just occurred.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha starts with why G-d led the Jewish people on an indirect route to Israel. The Pasuk writes (13:17), "G-d did not lead them by the way of the Philistines even though it was nearer, for G-d said perhaps the people will have a change of heart when they see war and return to Egypt."

But the Jewish nation still had a war-like frightening experience. When they approached the Sea of Reeds, as the Egyptian chariots were coming, they cried to Moshe that they were willing to return to Egypt. So why did G-d lead them in a roundabout way if it did not prevent them from wanting to return to Egypt? What's the reason they didn't just take a direct route to the land of Israel?!

The Bekhor Shor, *Rav Yosef Ben Yitzchak, a leading commentator from the mid-12th Century*, gives an interesting answer. He writes that the most direct route to Israel was past the Philistines. Since they wouldn't let the Jewish people pass through their country, they might run into war. Hence G-d led them on a roundabout way to circumvent the land of the Philistines.

The Bekhor Shor explains that had G-d led them near the Philistines, the Jewish people would have had twice the fear and anxiety. Since the Philistines would surely join the Egyptians as they prepared to attack and destroy the Jewish nation.

Therefore, G-d directed them to be far away from the land of the Philistines to prevent the Jewish people from experiencing further distress and grief.

However, the Rabbeinu Chananel, *Rav Chananel Ben Chushiel, an 11th-century Torah commentator*, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He answers that G-d led the Jewish people in a roundabout way to the Sea of Reeds to experience His power, strength and love.

So it is clear to the world whom G-d wanted to represent Him and exemplify His holiness on this earth. G-d directed the Jewish people to the Sea of Reeds to demonstrate that we are His chosen people.

The Rabbeinu Chananel explains that the Jewish people first had to learn what they were chosen for before they could enter the land of Israel.

Although it was said countless times during their slavery, not everyone internalized why they were being redeemed. So G-d made it evident to all that we, the Jewish nation, were created to manifest G-d's desires and serve Him wholeheartedly.

They were sent to the Sea of Reed to feel and recognize how G-d has elevated them above all others to be His representatives in this world.

To realize His love for us and see the singular and unique purpose for the Jewish people's creation. The seemingly indirect route to the Sea of Reed was, in fact, the most straightforward path to G-d.

In our daily life, it is imperative not to be discouraged as we attempt to define the meaning of our existence. Even as we hit multiple bumps in this journey called life, we must not lose our energy or spirit.

The whole purpose of a challenge is to build our character and strength to find our direction. So we can begin the journey to where we need to be even though that's not where we want to go.

**"Judaism constantly asks us to exercise our freedom.**

**To be a Jew is not to go with the flow or follow the path of least resistance.  
On the contrary, to be a Jew is to have the courage to live not to like others.**

**To live G-d's will and be one of His ambassadors to the world."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,*

*Rabbi Sholom Yemini*